

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USUN 7000

DEPARTMENT PASS AS DESIRED

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UNGA, XA

SUBJ: 30TH UNGA: AFRICAN ISSUES AND PERFORMANCE BY
THE AFRICAN GROUP

REF: USUN 6112 OF 1974

SUMMARY: UNLIKE LAST DECEMBER, WHEN THE AFRICAN GROUP AS A WHOLE LEFT THE 29TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN A STATE OF EUPHORIA, MOST AFRICANS RETURNING HOME THIS YEAR DO SO FRUSTRATED. FOR THEY CARRY ONLY THAT FOR WHICH THEY IN CONCERT WITH OTHER GROUPS WERE RESPONSIBLE: MANY EXTREME, UNENFORCEABLE AND OFTEN CONFLICTING RESOLUTIONS; AN ALUM OF ACRIMONY; AND A RECORD OF UNPRECEDENTED PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF DIFFERENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. WITH THE ADDITION OF FOUR MORE AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS THIS YEAR, AFRICAN STATES (EXCLUDING SOUTH AFRICA) NOW NUMBER FORTY-SIX, OR ALMOST A THIRD OF THE UN MEMBERSHIP. WHEREAS THE WATCHWORD OF THE AFRICAN GROUP PRIOR TO THIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAS BEEN, LITERALLY, THAT "PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF DISAGREEMENT AMONG AFRICAN MEMBERS ARE A SIGN OF POLITICAL IMMATURITY", THIS GUIDELINE WAS REVERSED DRAMATICALLY DURING THE 30TH UNGA. DISAGREEMENT NOW
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IS LAUDED AS A SIGN OF POLITICAL MATURITY. WHAT EFFECTED

THIS CHANGE? FIVE KEY FACTORS WERE INVOLVED:

A. AN ABSENCE OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP: THE LEADERSHIP EXERCISED BY ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTEFLIKA AT THE 29TH UNGA WAS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE "SUCCESS" OF THE AFRICAN GROUP LAST YEAR. BOUTEFLIKA, FOR REASONS PRESUMABLY BEST EXPLAINED BY INTERNAL ALGERIAN POLITICAL DYNAMICS, DID NOT PERFORM THAT VITAL FUNCTION THIS YEAR. BOUTEFLIKA'S COMPARATIVE INACTION DOES NOT EXPLAIN ENTIRELY, HOWEVER, WHY ALGERIA, WHICH WANTED SO TO CONTINUE IN ITS LEADERSHIP POSITION, LOST ITS SPELL OVER THE AFRICANS (AND OTHERS) IN VIRTUALLY ALL GA COMMITTEES. PERHAPS THE MISTAKE CAN BE TRACED TO EARLY THIS YEAR, WHEN ALGERIAN PERM REP RAHAL STATED THAT THE 30TH UNGA BEGAN JANUARY 1, 1975. HE WAS REFERRING TO THE MYRIAD OF CONFERENCES LEADING UP TO THE SESSION -- CONFERENCES WHICH, IN 1974, UNDER ALGERIAN LEADERSHIP, HAMMERED OUT MOST OF THE POSITIONS WHICH WERE HEADED BY THE "NON-ALIGNED" DURING THE 29TH GA. BUT SOMETHING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO NEW YORK. THE ALGERIANS DISCOVERED AT REGIONAL CONFERENCES THAT ALGERIAN MINISTERS OTHER THAN BOUTEFLIKA LACKED THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S CHARM AND ABILITY TO INFLUENCE. HIS REPLACEMENTS RESORTED INSTEAD TO STRONG-ARM TACTICS, WHICH ANTAGONIZED MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE. NO SUBSTITUTE FOR BOUTEFLIKA EMERGED FROM ELSEWHERE DURING THE 30TH UNGA, INCLUDING THE OAU OBSERVER'S OFFICE, AND THAT AFRICAN LEADERSHIP WHICH THERE WAS WAS EXERCISED BY INEFFICIENT DEMAGOGUES WHO WERE THE GROUP'S MONTHLY CHAIRMEN -- REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LIKES OF BENIN AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA. THE INABILITY OF THE ALGERIANS TO INFLUENCE CRITICAL DECISIONS RELATING TO THE SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION AND SPANISH SAHARA MAY HAVE AFFECTED AS WELL THEIR "LONG-RANGE" LEADERSHIP ROLE AT THE UNITED NATIONS. IN THE VIEW OF MANY, IT WAS THE ALGERIANS WHO LOST THE MOST DURING THE 30TH UNGA. THE TITULAR HEAD OF THE "NON-ALIGNED" NOW BECOMES SRI LANKA. BUT, WITH LITTLE IDEOLOGICAL STRENGTH, OR DEPTH IN MANPOWER, AND DESPITE SRI LANKA'S PROBABLE PRESIDENCY OF THE 31ST UNGA, SEVERAL, INCLUDING THIS MISSION, VIEW THE HEIR APPARENT TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE "NON-ALIGNED" (INCLUDING THE AFRICANS HERE) TO BE THE VIETNAMESE. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR SHARES THIS VIEW. NEXT YEAR? PERHAPS NOT, BUT CERTAINLY A DEVELOPMENT

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WORTH WATCHING.

B. ARAB PARSIMONY: THE AFRICANS HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THAT THEY WOULD RECEIVE FAR MORE AID THAN THEY ACTUALLY HAVE FROM THE ARABS, IN RETURN FOR BREAKING RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL AND VOTING SYMPATHETICALLY ON ARAB CAUSES. IN FACT, THE ARABS HAVE DONE VERY LITTLE AT ALL IN THE AREA OF AID TO AFRICA, AND THAT HAS NOT BEEN LOST ON THE AFRICANS. SUCH IS

IRONIC INDEED, SINCE MOST BLACK AFRICANS CONCEDE TO US PRIVATELY THAT "BLOC VOTING" WOULD RESUME WERE THE ARABS TO BECOME MORE GENEROUS.

C. NEW ASPECTS OF THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS: SOLUTIONS TO "COLONIAL QUESTIONS" ARE NO LONGER SIMPLE FOR THE AFRICANS. PREVIOUSLY, THESE WERE ISSUES WHICH OCCASIONED VIRTUALLY AUTOMATIC AFRICAN UNANIMITY. THE UN'S CONSIDERATION THIS YEAR OF SPANISH SAHARA, FRENCH SOMALILAND, BELIZE, TIMOR, AND ANGOLA SHOWED UNPRECEDENTED FRACTIONALISM AND OPEN DISAGREEMENT. ON THE SAHARA, FOR INSTANCE, IN PLENARY VOTING,

THE MOROCCAN-INSPIRED RESOLUTION WAS APPROVED, 56(US)-42-34. THIRTEEN AFRICAN STATES VOTED "YES", 22 VOTED "NO", 7 ABSTAINED. ON THE PRO-ALGERIAN RESOLUTION, WHICH PASSED, 88-0-41(US), 30 AFRICAN STATES VOTED FOR, 11 ABSTAINED. EVEN ON RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA, THERE WERE PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF DIFFERENCES AMONG THE AFRICANS CONCERNING MODALITIES FOR SOLUTIONS.

D. MATTERS OF PRINCIPLE: ON THE ZIONISM ISSUE AND ON ANGOLA, THE MAJORITY OF SUB-SAHARAN NON-ISLAMIC, NON-RADICAL AFRICAN STATES WERE NOT TO BE PUSHED AROUND BY THE ARABS AND THE COMMUNISTS. THEY ARGUED THEIR PRINCIPLES, AND GAVE SUPPORT TO POSITIONS SHARED BY THE UNITED STATES. ON ZIONISM, THIS WAS THE SAME COALITION WHICH HAD DEVELOPED IN KAMPALA AND LIMA. IT INVOLVED, FOR THE FIRST TIME, AN ARTICULATE AND FORCEFUL ROLE BY REPRESENTATIVES OF ZAIRE. IN PLENARY VOTING ON THE ZIONISM EQUALS RACISM RESOLUTION, AMONG SUB-SAHARAN BLACK AFRICAN STATES WITHOUT A SIGNIFICANT ISLAMIC POPULATION AND NOT UNDER A POLITICALLY "RADICAL" INFLUENCE, 16 EITHER OPPOSED EQUATING ZIONISM WITH RACISM OR ABSTAINED, WHILE ONLY 2 IN THAT CATEGORY DID LINK IT. CONFIDENTIAL

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ON A PREVIOUS MOTION, 12 IN THAT SAME CATEGORY HAD VOTED TO DEFER THE QUESTION UNTIL NEXT YEAR; ONLY 2 OPPOSED DEFERRAL, AND 3 ABSTAINED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 USUN 7000

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E. SPECIAL SESSION: THE SUCCESS OF THE SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION ALSO ENCOURAGED SPLITS WITHIN THE AFRICAN GROUP AT THE 30TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY. IT IS A SIMPLE FACT THAT MANY FOURTH WORLD COUNTRIES, ON THE BRINK OF STARVATION, CHOSE FOOD FROM AND COOPERATION WITH THE WEST RATHER THAN THE STERILE RHETORIC OF THEIR THIRD WORLD BROTHERS. THUS, THE MOOD GENERATED PRIOR TO THE OPENING OF THE 30TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY WAS A SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE IN SHAPING VOTING THEREAFTER.

2. AFTER CATALOGUING THESE ELEMENTS OF DISUNITY, THE RECORD MUST BE MADE COMPLETE BY FLAGGING THE FACT THAT ALL THE EX-PORTUGUESE AFRICAN TERRITORIES NOW IN THE UNITED NATIONS ARE BEHAVING AND VOTING ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY WITH THE SOVIETS. ALSO ADD BENIN, THE COMOROS, AND SEVERAL OTHERS TO THAT GROUP, WHOSE RELIABILITY IN SUPPORTING MOSCOW PARALLELS POLAND'S. CONSIDER GENERAL AFRICAN SUPPORT ON KOREA: TAKING FIRST THE NINE SUB-SAHARAN COUNTRIES WITH A SIGNIFICANT ISLAMIC POPULATION, THE VOTING PATTERNS IN PLENARY ON THE US-COSPONSORED RESOLUTION AND THE COMMUNIST-SPONSORED RESOLUTION WERE 0(US)-5-4 FOR THE US-COSPONSORED RESOLUTION, 7-0(US)-2 FOR THE COMMUNIST-SPONSORED RESOLUTION. TAKING NEXT THE THIRTY-TWO SUB-SAHARAN COUNTRIES WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT ISLAMIC POPULATIONS, THE VOTING PATTERNS IN PLENARY ON KOREA
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WERE AS FOLLOWS: US-CONSPONSORED RESOLUTION 8(US)-19-5, COMMUNIST-SPONSORED RESOLUTION 20-7(US)-5. (ABSENCES ARE COUNTED FOR THIS PURPOSE AS ABSTENTIONS; SOUTH AFRICA IS EXCLUDED FROM THESE STATISTICS.)

3. HOW HAS THE UNITED STATES BEEN PERCEIVED BY THE AFRICANS

DURING THE 30TH SESSION? AS IN ALL QUESTIONS HERE, THERE IS A PUBLIC AND A PRIVATE RESPONSE. PUBLICLY, AFRICANS SEEM TO FEEL ABOUT US AS DID THE FRENCH AT THE HEIGHT OF PARIS' TOURIST BOOM IN THE 1950'S. AMERICANS ARE NOISY AND PUSHY, AND WE'D JUST AS SOON DO WITHOUT YOU. PRIVATELY, AFRICANS TALK OF US AS DID THE FRENCH HOTEL OWNERS OF THE 1970'S: WE DON'T LIKE YOU THAT MUCH, BUT YOU DO HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER WHICH WE NEED DESPERATELY, AND NO ONE ELSE REALLY CARES ABOUT US AS MUCH. AND IN ALL THE CORRIDOR AND PUBLIC DEBATE GOING ON OVER ANGOLA, THERE HAS BEEN FEAR OF SOVIET RECOLONIZATION AND OF SOUTH AFRICAN RECOLONIZATION, BUT NOT OF AMERICAN COLONIZATION OF AFRICA. FURTHER, THE EXAMPLE OF THE UNITED STATES SPEAKING OUT AT THE 30TH UNGA MAY WELL HAVE ENCOURAGED OTHERS TO DO SO, AND COULD DO SO EVEN MORE IN THE FUTURE. VERY FEW WILL ACKNOWLEDGE THIS, SINCE IT IS NOT A PARTICULARLY POPULAR REACTION TO CONCEDE.

4. SO, MANY AFRICANS RETURN HOME LICKING THEIR WOUNDS FROM OPEN SPLITS ON KEY ISSUES AT THE 30TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY. THEY ARE FRUSTRATED OVER WHAT MANY, INCLUDING LEADERS SUCH AS SALIM OF TANZANIA, FEEL TO BE AN ABANDONMENT OF IDEALS (SAHARA, TIMOR). "BROTHERS" TURNED OUT NOT TO BE BROTHERS AFTER ALL. (HOW MANY REALLY THOUGHT THEY WERE IN THE FIRST PLACE?) WHILE THE RADICALISM REMAINS, AND AFRICANS ACCOUNTED FOR FULLY A THIRD OF THE ANTI-AMERICAN RHETORIC AT THE 30TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY, WE NEVERTHELESS CONCLUDE OPTIMISTICALLY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF OUR OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS. THE AFRICANS HERE ARE BEHAVING MORE AND MORE INDIVIDUALISTICALLY. SUCH REALISM IS INDEED IN OUR OWN INTERESTS. BESET WITH MOUNTING AND COMPLICATED ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS, THE AFRICANS MAY BE SENSING TO A GREATER DEGREE THE NEED FOR PRACTICAL RATHER THAN PURELY DEMONSTRATIVE RESULTS FROM THE UNITED NATIONS. IF THIS IS SO, AGAIN, IT IS IN OUR INTERESTS.

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